

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

1-28. (Canceled)

29. (Currently Amended) A method of processing data in a computer system comprising at least one host and at least one storage system, the method comprising acts of:

- (A) receiving a request, from the host, to delete a unit of data stored on the storage system;
- (B) in response to the request, determining whether a previously-defined retention period for the unit of data has expired by performing acts of:
  - (B1) retrieving first information, associated with the unit of data, that identifies a manner of accessing second information specifying the previously-defined retention period, wherein the first information is information identifying a retention class to which the unit of data belongs, wherein the second information is the previously-defined retention period for the retention class that defines a period of time during which units of data belonging to the retention class cannot be deleted from and/or modified on the at least one storage system, and wherein the at least one storage system stores a record associating the retention period with the retention class; and
  - (B2) using the first information to retrieve the second information specifying the previously-defined retention period; and
- (C) when it is determined in the act (B) that the retention period for the unit of data has not expired, denying the request to delete the unit of data, wherein the first information is information identifying a retention class to which the unit of data belongs, wherein the second information is a retention period that defines a period of time during which the unit of data cannot be deleted from and/or modified on the at least one storage system, and is associated with the retention class, and wherein the method further comprises an act of maintaining, on the at least one storage system, a record associating the retention period with the retention class.

30. (Original) The method of claim 29, further comprising an act (D) of deleting the unit of data when it is determined in the act (B) that the retention period for the unit of data has expired.

31. (Canceled)

32. (Original) The method of claim 31, wherein the act (B2) further comprises accessing the record on the storage system to retrieve the previously-defined retention period.

33. (Original) The method of claim 31, further comprising an act of:

(D) receiving, at the at least one storage system, a second request from the at least one host, requesting that the at least one storage system modify the retention period of the retention class.

34. (Original) The method of claim 33, wherein the second request is a request to reduce the retention period of the retention class.

35. (Original) The method of claim 33, wherein the second request is a request to increase the retention period of the retention class.

36. (Original) The method of claim 33, further comprising an act of:

modifying the second information specifying the retention period in response to the second request.

37. (Original) The method of claim 36, wherein the act of modifying further comprises modifying the second information without modifying the content of the unit of data.

38. (Original) The method of claim 33, wherein the second request comprises an event command indicating the occurrence of an event.

39. (Original) The method of claim 38, wherein the event command does not specify the manner in which the retention period of the retention class is to be reduced, and wherein the act (D) further comprises an act of determining the manner of reducing the retention period of the retention class by referring to information stored within or accessible to the storage system.

40. (Original) The method of claim 33, wherein the second request specifies the manner in which the length of the retention period of the retention class is to be reduced.

41. (Original) The method of claim 34, wherein the act (D) further comprises acts of:

(D1) determining whether the retention period for the retention class is permitted to be reduced; and

(D2) reducing the retention period only when the retention period for the retention class is permitted to be reduced.

42. (Original) The method of claim 41, wherein the act (D1) further comprises an act of determining whether the retention period of the retention class is designated as capable of being reduced.

43. (Original) The method of claim 42, wherein the act (D1) further comprises determining whether the retention period of the retention class is designated as capable of being reduced by examining the retention period.

44. (Original) The method of claim 42, wherein the act (D1) further comprises determining whether the retention period of the retention class is designated as capable of being reduced by examining a flag associated with the retention class.

45. (Currently Amended) At least one computer readable medium encoded with instructions that, when executed on a computer system, perform a method of processing data, the computer system comprising at least one host and at least one storage system, the method comprising acts of:

- (A) receiving a request, from the host, to delete a unit of data stored on the storage system;
- (B) in response to the request, determining whether a previously-defined retention period for the unit of data has expired by performing acts of:
  - (B1) retrieving first information, associated with the unit of data, that identifies a manner of accessing second information specifying the previously-defined retention period, wherein the first information is information identifying a retention class to which the unit of data belongs, wherein the second information is the previously-defined retention period for the retention class that defines a period of time during which unit of data belong to the retention class cannot be deleted from and/or modified on the at least one storage system, and wherein the at least one storage system stores a record associating the retention period with the retention class; and
  - (B2) using the first information to retrieve the second information specifying the previously-defined retention period; and
- (C) when it is determined in the act (B) that the retention period for the unit of data has not expired, denying the request to delete the unit of data, wherein the first information is information identifying a retention class to which the unit of data belongs, wherein the second information is a retention period that defines a period of time during which the unit of data cannot be deleted from and/or modified on the at least one storage system, and is associated with the retention class, and wherein the method further comprises an act of maintaining, on the at least one storage system, a record associating the retention period with the retention class.

46. (Original) The at least one computer readable medium of claim 45, wherein the method further comprises an act (D) of deleting the unit of data when it is determined in the act (B) that the retention period for the unit of data has expired.

47. (Canceled)

48. (Original) The at least one computer readable medium of claim 47, wherein the act (B2) further comprises accessing the record on the storage system to retrieve the previously-defined retention period.

49. (Original) The at least one computer readable medium of claim 47, wherein the method further comprises an act of:

(D) receiving, at the at least one storage system, a second request from the at least one host, requesting that the at least one storage system modify the retention period of the retention class.

50. (Original) The at least one computer readable medium of claim 49, wherein the second request is a request to reduce the retention period of the retention class.

51 (Original) The at least one computer readable medium of claim 49, wherein the second request is a request to increase the retention period of the retention class.

52. (Original) The at least one computer readable medium of claim 49, wherein the method further comprises an act of:

modifying the second information specifying the retention period in response to the second request.

53. (Original) The at least one computer readable medium of claim 52, wherein the act of modifying further comprises modifying the second information without modifying content of the unit of data.

54. (Original) The at least one computer readable medium of claim 49, wherein the second request comprises an event command indicating the occurrence of an event.

55. (Original) The at least one computer readable medium of claim 54, wherein the event command does not specify the manner in which the retention period of the retention class is to be

reduced and wherein the act (D) further comprises an act of determining the manner of reducing the retention period of the retention class by referring to information stored within or accessible to the storage system.

56. (Original) The at least one computer readable medium of claim 49, wherein the second request specifies the retention period to be reduced and the manner in which the length of the retention period of the retention class is to be reduced.

57. (Original) The at least one computer readable medium of claim 50, wherein the act (D) further comprises acts of:

(D1) determining whether the retention period for the retention class is permitted to be reduced; and

(D2) reducing the retention period only when the retention period for the retention class is permitted to be reduced.

58. (Original) The at least one computer readable medium of claim 57, wherein the act (D1) further comprises an act of determining whether the retention period of the retention class is designated as capable of being reduced.

59. (Original) The at least one computer readable medium of claim 58, wherein the act (D1) further comprises determining whether the retention period of the retention class is designated as capable of being reduced by examining the retention period.

60. (Original) The at least one computer readable medium of claim 58, wherein the act (D1) further comprises determining whether the retention period of the retention class is designated as capable of being reduced by examining a flag associated with the retention class.

61. (Currently Amended) A storage system for use in a computer system including the storage system and at least one host, the storage system comprising:

at least one storage device to store a unit of data; and  
at least one controller that is adapted to:

receive a request, from the host, to delete the unit of data; and

in response to the request, determine whether a retention period for the unit of data has expired by performing acts of:

retrieving first information, associated with the unit of data, that identifies a manner of accessing second information specifying the previously-defined retention period; and

using the first information to retrieve the second information specifying the previously-defined retention period, wherein the first information is information identifying a retention class to which the unit of data belongs, wherein the second information is the previously-defined retention period for the retention class that defines a period of time during which units of data belonging to the retention class cannot be deleted from and/or modified on the at least one storage system, and wherein the at least one storage system stores a record associating the retention period with the retention class; and

when it determines that the retention period for the unit of data has not expired, deny the request to delete the unit of data, wherein the first information is information identifying a retention class to which the unit of data belongs, wherein the second information is a retention period that defines a period of time during which the unit of data cannot be deleted from and/or modified on the storage system, and is associated with the retention class, and wherein the at least one controller is adapted to maintain, on the storage system, a record associating the retention period with the retention class.

62. (Previously Presented) The storage system of claim 61, wherein the at least one controller is adapted to delete the unit of data when it determines that the retention period for the unit of data has expired.

63. (Canceled)

64. (Original) The storage system of claim 63, wherein the at least one controller accesses the record on the storage system to retrieve the previously-defined retention period.

65. (Original) The storage system of claim 63, wherein the at least one controller is adapted to receive a second request from the at least one host requesting that the at least one storage system modify the retention period of the retention class, and to modify the second information specifying the retention period in response to the second request.

66. (Original) The storage system of claim 65, wherein the second request comprises an event command indicating the occurrence of an event.

67. (Original) The storage system of claim 66, wherein the event command does not specify the manner in which the retention period of the retention class is to be reduced and wherein the at least one controller is adapted to determine the manner of reducing the retention period of the retention class by referring to information stored within or accessible to the storage system.

68. (Original) The storage system of claim 65, wherein the second request includes third information that specifies the retention period to be reduced and the manner in which the length of the retention period of the retention class is to be reduced, and the at least one controller is adapted to reduce the length of the retention period based on the third information.

69. (Original) The storage system of claim 65, wherein the at least one controller is adapted to, in response to a second request that seeks to reduce the retention period:  
determine whether the retention period for the retention class is permitted to be reduced; and  
reduce the retention period only when the retention period for the retention class is permitted to be reduced.

70. (Original) The storage system of claim 69, wherein the at least one controller is adapted to determine whether the retention period of the retention class is capable of being reduced by determining whether the retention period is designated as capable of being reduced.

71. (Original) The storage system of claim 70, wherein the at least one controller is adapted to determine whether the retention period of the retention class is designated as capable of being reduced by examining the retention period.

72. (Original) The storage system of claim 70, wherein the at least one controller is adapted to determine whether the retention period of the retention class is designated as capable of being reduced by examining a flag associated with the retention class.

73. (Original) The storage system of claim 61, wherein the at least one controller comprises:  
means for receiving a request, from the host, to delete the unit of data stored on the storage system;  
means for determining whether a previously-defined retention period for the unit of data has expired by:

retrieving first information, associated with the unit of data, that identifies a manner of accessing second information specifying the previously-defined retention period;  
and

using the first information to retrieve the second information specifying the previously-defined retention period; and

means for, when it is determined that the retention period for the unit of data has not expired, denying the request to delete the unit of data.

74. (Previously Presented) A method of processing data in a computer system comprising at least one host and at least one storage system that stores a plurality of data units belonging to a retention class, wherein the retention class specifies a retention period for each of the plurality of data units belonging to the retention class and wherein the method comprises an act of:

transmitting a request from the at least one host to the at least one storage system to modify the retention period specified by the retention class, thereby modifying a period of time during which the plurality of data units belonging to the retention class cannot be deleted from and/or modified on the at least one storage system.

75. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 74, wherein the request to modify the retention period is a request to reduce the retention period specified by the retention class.

76. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 74, wherein the request to modify the retention period is a request to increase the retention period of the retention class.

77. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 74, wherein the request comprises an event command indicating the occurrence of an event.

78. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 77, wherein the event command does not specify the manner in which the retention period of the retention class is to be reduced.

79. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 74, wherein the request specifies that the retention period specified by the retention class be reduced and the manner in which the length of the retention period of the retention class is to be reduced.

80. (Previously Presented) At least one computer readable medium encoded with instructions that, when executed on a computer system, cause the computer system to perform a method of processing data, the computer system comprising at least one host and at least one storage system that stores a plurality of data units belonging to a retention class, wherein the retention class specifies a retention period for each of the plurality of data units belonging to the retention class, and wherein the method comprises an act of:

transmitting a request from the at least one host to the at least one storage system to modify the retention period specified by the retention class, thereby modifying a period of time during

which the plurality of data units belonging to the retention class cannot be deleted from and/or modified on the at least one storage system.

81. (Previously Presented) The at least one computer readable medium of claim 80, wherein the request to modify the retention period is a request to reduce the retention period specified by the retention class.

82. (Previously Presented) The at least one computer readable medium of claim 80, wherein the request to modify the retention period is a request to increase the retention period of the retention class.

83. (Previously Presented) The at least one computer readable medium of claim 80, wherein the request comprises an event command indicating the occurrence of an event.

84. (Previously Presented) The at least one computer readable medium of claim 83, wherein the event command does not specify the manner in which the retention period of the retention class is to be reduced.

85. (Previously Presented) The at least one computer readable medium of claim 80, wherein the request specifies that the retention period specified by the retention class be reduced and the manner in which the length of the retention period of the retention class is to be reduced.

86. (Previously Presented) A host computer for use in a computer system that includes the host computer and at least one storage system that stores a plurality of data units belonging to a retention class, wherein the retention class specifies a retention period for each of the plurality of data units belonging to the retention class, the host computer comprising:

a processor programmed to:

transmit a request to the at least one storage system to modify the retention period specified by the retention class, thereby modifying a period of time during which the

plurality of data units belonging to the retention class cannot be deleted from and/or modified on the at least one storage system.

87. (Previously Presented) The host computer claim 86, wherein the request to modify the retention period is a request to reduce the retention period specified by the retention class.

88. (Previously Presented) The host computer of claim 86, wherein the request to modify the retention period is a request to increase the retention period of the retention class.

89. (Previously Presented) The host computer of claim 86, wherein the request comprises an event command indicating the occurrence of an event.

90. (Previously Presented) The host computer of claim 89, wherein the event command does not specify the manner in which the retention period of the retention class is to be reduced.

91. (Previously Presented) The host computer of claim 86, wherein the request specifies that the retention period specified by the retention class be reduced and the manner in which the length of the retention period of the retention class is to be reduced.